

DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR) ORDERS AND PHYSICIAN ORDERS FOR LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT (POLST) IN THE PREHOSPITAL SETTING

I. PURPOSE

This policy identifies those orders for withholding resuscitative measures and the treatment of patients with an advanced airway that can be honored in the prehospital setting.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. A Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) order is an order written by a physician, in consultation with the patient or surrogate to withhold life saving measures should the patient succumb to a cardiac arrest.
- B. A Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) is an order sheet defining the care of a patient based on the person's current medical condition and wishes.
- C. A surrogate is a patient's legal representative, e.g. a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care agent, a court-appointed conservator, spouse or other family member.

III. DNR ORDERS HONORED BY PREHOSPITAL PERSONNEL

The following types of DNR orders may be honored by prehospital personnel:

- A. A California EMSA/CMA Prehospital DNR form.
- B. A California EMSA POLST form where Section A – Do Not Attempt Resuscitation/DNR has been chosen.
- C. A DNR order in the medical record of a licensed healthcare facility (e.g., acute care hospital, skilled nursing facilities, hospices, intermediate care facilities) signed by a physician.
- D. A verbal DNR order given by the patient's physician who is present at the scene. (EMS personnel may not accept a verbal order by telephone without base hospital physician approval.)
- E. A MedicAlert medallion/bracelet that says "Do Not Resuscitate – EMS."

IV. PROCEDURE FOR COMPLYING WITH AN HONORED DNR ORDER

DNR orders only apply to patients in cardiac arrest. A patient with a DNR order that is not in cardiac arrest should be provided with treatment as appropriate for their complaint unless a Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) is in place that directs care differently. (see POLST procedure below) **A patient (or patient's surrogate) may verbally rescind the DNR order at any time.**

If a DNR order is available:

- A. Review the DNR order to verify that it is appropriately completed (patient or surrogate's signature and physician's signature) and that it does not appear to have been altered or amended.
- B. Verify the identity of the patient as being the person for whom the DNR order is intended.
- C. Perform no life saving measures.
- D. Cancel the responding ambulance if not needed and not yet on scene.

V. PROCEDURE FOR COMPLYING WITH A POLST FORM

- A. Review the POLST form to verify that it is appropriately completed (patient or surrogate's signature and physician's signature) and that it does not appear to have been altered or amended.
- B. Verify the identity of the patient as being the person for whom the POLST form is intended.
- C. **Section A – Person has no pulse and is not breathing**
 - 1. If "Attempt Resuscitation/CPR" is marked – patient receives full care.
 - 2. If "Do Not Attempt Resuscitation/DNR" is marked – no life saving measures should be done.**Section B – Person has pulse and/or breathing**
 - 1. If "Full Treatment" is marked – patient receives full care.
 - 2. If "Limited Additional Interventions" or "Comfort Measures Only" is marked – No Advanced Airway should be done – all other medications or treatment will be done.**Section C – does not apply to Prehospital Setting**
- D. If DNR, no life saving measures should be done – cancel responding ambulance.
- E. Other patients should be transported. If not transported, follow EMS Policy for patients declining emergency medical care and transport.

VI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. A DNR order or POLST form is presented, but on-scene relatives object to the order or the validity of the form is in question:
 - 1. Provide all appropriate care/resuscitation measures for the patient. Although a patient's instructions should remain paramount, resuscitation is to be done until the situation is clarified.
 - 2. EMS personnel shall make base hospital contact. Base hospital physicians retain responsibility and authority for determining appropriateness and extent of prehospital resuscitation decisions.
- B. If CPR is initiated prior to the presentation of an approved DNR order, CPR may be discontinued without base hospital contact.
- C. If both a DNR and POLST form are presented follow the order with the most current date.

NOTE: EMS personnel shall document all relevant information on a PCR for all patients. DNR orders/POLST forms shall be attached to PCRs if a patient is not transported.